

THE SKYWAY RIVER LOOP



THE SKYWAY SHOULD BE CELEBRATED!

Our Skyway River Loop proposal is about simplicity. It's about creating beauty from what already exists and providing New York State maximum value for minimal capital expenditure. Skyway River Loop celebrates Buffalo. It symbolizes the shortest distance between the past and the present and offers the possibility of a truly activated waterfront. For that reason, our proposal for Skyway River Loop rests on a signature move: keeping the Skyway, adding to it, reframing it for new uses.

We love the Skyway, seeing it as an iconic and recognizable symbol of Buffalo. When the mile-long 110-foot-tall bridge opened in 1955, the press described it as "the grand dream of a progressive, utilitarian and lovely community here at the foot of the Great Lakes," and it remains the best way to get from downtown to the lakeside Southtowns communities while providing ship traffic access to Kelly Island and the Buffalo River. One of western New York's modernist icons, it frames Canalside and the Inner and Outer Harbor with views into and out of downtown.

We propose modifying the Skyway's relationship to the surrounding circulation. When it is no longer an adjunct of Interstate 190, the Skyway will operate as a truly local bridge, a parkway, and eventually perhaps a multimodal route, offering unparalleled views of the Harbor.

Skyway River Loop is about making connections to the existing neighborhoods, supporting their further development and use. The Loop itself consists of new links across the water at S. Michigan Avenue and at Ohio Street, transecting Kelly Island and the historic canal, creating a new waterfront greenway that is its own destination while also connecting previously underutilized or vacant land. The creation of newly accessible spaces, in

combination with recently completed or soon-to-be-complete investments in downtown, will form a constellation of activated hubs, beautifully interlaced with a newly accessible waterfront.

In creating Skyway River Loop, our team has been inspired by Buffalo's history of ambition coupled with levelheadedness. Buffalo dreams but knows how to get it done. Eschewing mega capital costs of demolishing the Skyway and relocating its circulation, we reduce the burden on the State while helping to create a vital waterfront destination featuring a broad variety of uses with wide appeal. In this new context, the Skyway will become a renewed icon of adaptive urbanism—a natural extension of the resilient spirit of Buffalo, a symbol of connection, and stage for the future in the presence of the historic past.

Keep the Skyway and reinforce the heart of Buffalo.

RECONNECT TO THE RIVER



The Buffalo River and later the I-190 have divided the city between the urban north and the industrial south.

Existing and planned bicycle routes have been reinforced within the urban north, neglecting the neighborhoods to the south.

The Skyway River Loop reinvigorates the harbor by reconnecting Southtowns and waterfront areas to downtown.

THE HEART OF BUFFALO

The waterfront has always been the heart and soul of Buffalo. The city grew around the river, and the river has been its economic engine, evidenced recently by its late 20th century decline. The waterfront—once lined almost singularly with warehouses, distribution terminals, or factories—is now a vast unarticulated space separating the city from the lake. This area can be transformed into a vibrant green space with a mix of public and ecological uses suitable for residents and visitors, alike.

Connectivity between Inner and Outer Harbor will not be improved by removing the Skyway, and will damage the relationship between City proper and its southern neighbors. True change will come from reinforcing a network of street-level connections around and across the river. A continuous loop of pedestrian, bicycle and public transit networks can link the Inner Harbor, Outer Harbor and Kelly Island, and bring together industrial, recreational, residential, educational, cultural and business uses in a way that has not been realized elsewhere.

By revitalizing the waterfront, we are contesting the narrative of decline, both literally and figuratively, offering a new vision of a vital and connected community that can serve as an example to the world.



Aerial view of Buffalo waterfront



1805

Joseph Ellicott establishes urban Buffalo at the mouth of the Buffalo Creek



1855

Revitalize Buffalo's heritage of bridges by reconnecting Michigan Avenue to the Outer Harbor, reestablishing the heart of Buffalo at the mouth of the Buffalo River

1895

As shown in this 1905 map, Buffalo's future was oriented as a main hub for the Erie Canal and its relationship to the river

1924

Downtown is disconnected as the scale of industrialization on the river increases

1954

The construction of the Skyway provides easy access to the lakeside Southtowns, leaving the harbor and River usable for shipping





The Skyway River Loop proposal challenges the idea of removing the Skyway and focuses on reconnecting the city to the waterfront in a more cost effective way. By keeping the Skyway and its main function - connecting lakeside Southtowns communities to Downtown - the city will be able to avoid the large spending related to the demolition of the structure, redirecting traffic, and adding lanes to various other existing highways. This also reduces time and nuisance associated with the planning and construction of such a big infrastructure project - which can then be allocated more efficiently to projects that positively impact the community.

Connectivity will be solved at street-level by re-connecting South Michigan Avenue and creating a new access from Ohio Street - at Silo City - to the Outer Harbor, by creating a new pedestrian and bicycle gateway around the riverfront, and by improving Main Street, Michigan Avenue and Ohio Street streetscape.

The proposal, built in two phases includes:
(See Skyway River Loop Work Areas below for a detail list of work included in this proposal)

Bridges

1. Exterior Lighting and selective paint at the Skyway, over the Buffalo River and City Canal
2. New operable vehicular + Pedestrian bridge at S Michigan Ave over the City Ship Canal

Major Roadways

3. Removal of Skyway ramps at 190, Erie St and Pearl Street

Local Roadways

4. Streetscape improvements at Church Street
5. Streetscape improvements at Main Street
6. Streetscape improvements at S Michigan Avenue
7. Streetscape improvements at Ohio Street Corridor
8. New roadway crossing the railway and earthen culvert across canal
9. Streetscape improvements at Fairmount Boulevard
10. New Buffalo Skyway access road, from Michigan Ave to Ohio St

Buildings & Civic Structures

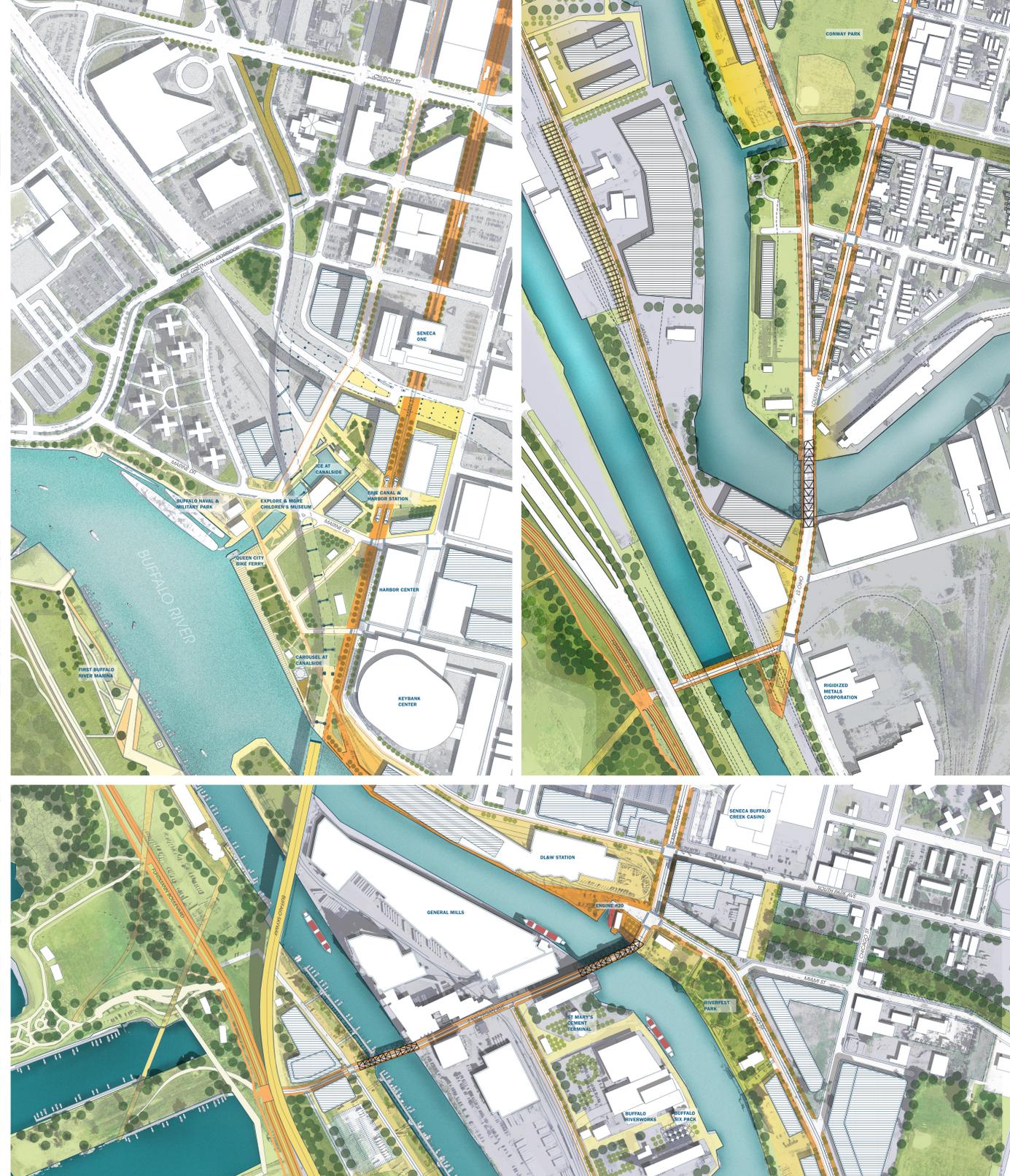
11. DL&W Station - Improvements for access and preparation for event space
12. Main Street Passage Improvements, One Seneca Tower

Open Space

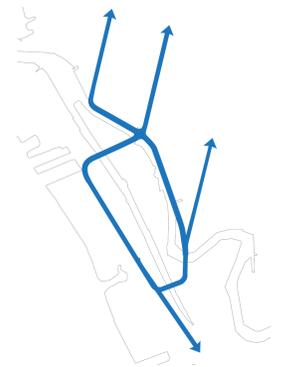
13. Open Space and Waterfront access along S Park Ave
14. Open Space and Waterfront access improvements at Riverfest Park
15. Open Space and Waterfront access improvements at South Street Waterfront Park
16. Support, connect and extend the DL&W Corridor (Phase 2)
17. Support, connect and extend the Republic Street, between Louisiana and Hamburg

Public Transit

18. Inner/Outer Harbor South Loop

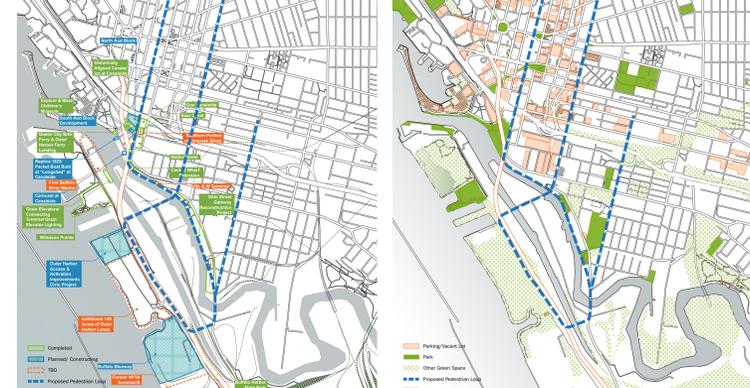


THE SKYWAY RIVER LOOP



Existing local roads have the potential to serve as useful connectors between the Inner Harbor (Downtown, Canalside, Perry, South Elliott, Old First Ward and Silo City) and Outer Harbor. Our main goal is to trace this existing but hidden connecting loop and fill the gaps, positively changing the way existing and new assets relate to each other by changing the way people move from one area to another.

CAPITALIZING ON EXISTING ATTRACTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES



Downtown Buffalo has a variety of cultural, historic, sports and entertainment attractions. In addition, there has been a lot of investment around the waterfront in the last decade. The Skyway River Loop will establish missing connections that will link new developments and attractions to older ones, encouraging neighbors and visitors to move around and experience all that the heart of Buffalo has to offer.

This plan provides an opportunity to establish a network of green spaces (active and passive) at the lower grounds, which in turn will create a new civic, ecological and nature oasis that will connect people, green infrastructure, flora and fauna.

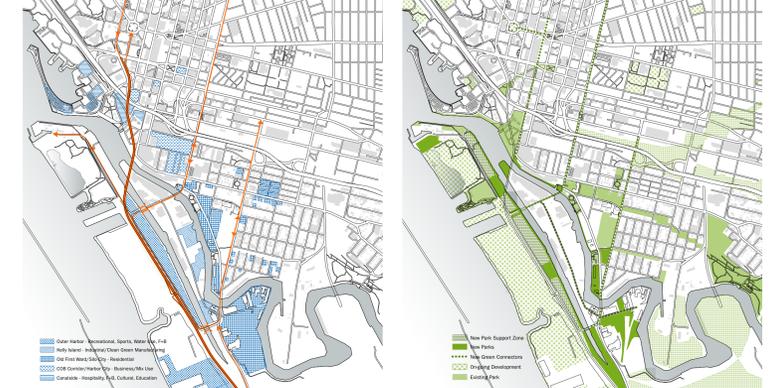
REINFORCE STREET-LEVEL CONNECTIONS



The Skyway should exist independently from Interstate 190, turning it from an adjunct of the highway into a local bridge with its own identity and connections to the downtown grid. Additionally, by extending the city grid into the outer harbor we will prioritize pathways for pedestrian and bicycle traffic to facilitate easy access to the waterfront and parks.

Prioritize and improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to the Outer Harbor by creating a loop that links the surrounding neighborhoods, allowing neighbors and visitors easy access to new waterfront parks, civic & recreational activities and nature preserve areas in the Outer Harbor, while also significantly improving connections between Old First Ward and Main Street.

UNCOVER LATENT POTENTIAL AT THE HEART OF THE CITY



The new Skyway River Loop proposes to keep the existing uses and character of the neighborhoods, with new residential in-fill of vacant lots in Old First Ward and Perry, keeping Kelly Island as an industrial zone with General Mills and/or future clean green manufacturing, mix-use and hospitality around Canalside, and keeping Outer Harbor for Parks, water related uses, recreation and minimal commercial activity.

The Skyway River Loop will also connect existing and planned green spaces by filling the gaps to establishing a robust network of public open spaces with designated lakefront/riverfront public access. Through this network the proposal lays the ground to create a comprehensive green infrastructure system to manage water, encourage biodiversity and promote natural habitats.



COST ESTIMATE

LOCATION	WORK ITEM	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	POTENTIAL FUTURE PHASE
Bridges				
Overpass over the Buffalo River and City Canal	Laborer lighting + washed painting and improvements	3,200,000		
Michigan Avenue Vertical Lift Bridge	Improvements to existing bridge for pedestrian + bicycle access	400,000		
Over Street Bridge	Improvements to existing bridge for pedestrian + bicycle access	500,000		
St. Michigan Ave over the City Ship Canal	New operable vehicular + pedestrian bicycle bridge	70,000,000		
	2 lanes and one bicycle + pedestrian lane - new the paving and removal of existing barrier			2,680,000
Skyway lane closure				
Major Roadways				
Skyway at 150, Erie St and Pearl Street	Removal of the Skyway ramps to 150 (4 total)	6,000,000		
1500 on ramp at Louisiana St	New horizontal ramp from Louisiana Street to 1500	2,440,000		
Local Roadways				
Street intersection Modifications	New signals and traffic controls	3,875,000		
Phase 1 - Streetscape Improvements at various streets throughout Downtown, Inner and Outer Harbor (see detail cost estimate in Technical Report)			33,629,820	
Phase 2 Streetscape Improvements at various streets throughout Downtown, Inner and Outer Harbor (see detail cost estimate in Technical Report)				10,525,000
Buildings & Civic Structures				
UAW Station	Improvements for access and preparation of the hall for a food + market tenants, and event space	presently underway		
Main Street Passage Improvements, One Seneca Tower	Main Street Passage Improvements, One Seneca Tower		5,000,000	
Open Space				
St Park Ave, Below and near Skyway	Open space and waterfront access improvements	2,000,000		
Brooklyn Park	Updated open space and waterfront access improvements		7,300,000	
South Street Waterfront Park	Open space and waterfront access improvements	5,900,000		
UAW Corridor	Open space and neighborhood connection extending across the First Ward		52,000,000	
Seneca Street between Cassiana and Hamburg	Open space on elevated railroad		9,000,000	
Public Transit				
Street/Outer Harbor South Loop	Provision of shuttle/bus transit stops, canopy + windbreaker	1,500,000		
Facelift @ 3.5¢ per year (2 years per phase)		8,870,417	5,867,750	375,200
Projected Subtotal		\$135,728,237	\$89,692,750	\$3,058,200
Allowance for Utility and Services Improvements	30%	\$40,718,473	\$26,907,825	\$919,560
Contingency	10%	\$13,572,824	\$8,969,275	\$305,820
Allowance for Design and Project Management Services	20%	\$27,145,648	\$17,938,550	\$611,640
Construction	20%	\$27,145,648	\$17,938,550	\$611,640
Overall Contingency	20%	\$27,145,648	\$17,938,550	\$611,640
Construction and Design	10%	\$13,572,824	\$8,969,275	\$305,820
PROJECTED TOTAL		\$285,843,668	\$188,892,932	\$6,434,251

PROJECT AFFORDABILITY & FUNDING

Proposed funding methods, sources, finance structures, and uses

The cost of the Skyway River Loop is expected to be financed through a public private partnership, whereby proceeds from the sale or long-term lease of public sites for private development (retail/entertainment, office, industrial) in addition to payments in lieu of taxes and district improvement payments will contribute to the funding of the public infrastructure. Through the Team's concept, 11.2 million SF of developable land will be activated through connections to the downtown market via a mixed-use corridor that will be enhanced with a basket of public amenities. Based on our initial estimates, Phase 1 is projected to cost approximately \$283 million while Phase 2 is projected to cost approximately \$191 million for a total development cost of \$474 million.

The Team proposes three sources of revenue that would support the issuance of municipal bonds that will fund project improvements, as has been done in projects of similar in size, scope, and ambition throughout New York State. The three sources are:

- Upfront Land or Ground Lease Payments** – Using a broad-based comparable geography, the analysis below finds land currently trading at between \$2-\$8 per SF, depending on intended use. Due to the location of the project site – proximate to the key assets and the downtown marketplace – it is likely that disposition pricing could be higher than current comparables. We used a range of between \$5-\$10 per SF for the 11.2 million square feet in order to estimate potential sale proceeds of between \$56 million and \$112 million to partially fund the Skyway River Loop.
- Property Taxes** – Property taxes in the form of payment-in-lieu-of-tax (PILOTs) from private development on public land in the corridor could be captured by the State sponsor authority and made available for monetization through a project financing. Depending on the structure, PILOTs from private property could also be pledged as a debt repayment stream.
- Improvement District Payments** – The establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) or other Improvement District along the Skyway River Loop corridor would allow for a mechanism to fund project elements, and ensure their upkeep. In addition, a BID or other form of improvement district could be focused on complimentary operations or programming for the public improvements, particularly the open space. A payment tied to private ownership in the district could also be captured for the debt service of the financing of these improvements.

Skyway River Loop Funding Methods				
Source	Structure	Use		
Upfront Land / Ground Lease Payments	Sale Proceeds	Potential sale proceeds to partially fund Skyway River Loop, between \$56 million and \$112 million		
Property Taxes	Payment-in-lieu-of-tax (PILOTs) captured by the State sponsor authority	Monetization through a project financing and potential debt repayment stream		
Improvement District Payments	Business Improvement District (BID) or other Improvement District	Fund project elements and ensure their upkeep; Complimentary operations or programming for public improvements, particularly for open space		

2018-19 Retail Gap Analysis: Existing Demand				
Location	Tourism		Distribution/Logistics	
	Service Gap	Potential New Employees	Service Gap	Potential New Employees
Buffalo-Niagara Region	\$609,740,724	2,183	\$274,935,464	1,178
Buffalo City	\$275,946,155	1,506	\$29,037,045	158

PROJECT FEASIBILITY & ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Economic Benefits to the Local Community

The Skyway River Loop activates dormant land by improving accessibility through pedestrian/bicycle connections to a network of green spaces and parks along the Outer Harbor Parks, as a driver for economic development, provide one of the most established and historically proven benefits to local communities. Examples such as the Brooklyn Bridge Park, the Waterfront in Troy, and the Erie Canal demonstrate that the activation of open spaces by improving accessibility and walkability not only increases quality of life, but also can attract private investment and provide new and expanded job opportunities.

Positive impacts of our Team's proposed project come in the form of economic impacts and can be measured through new jobs, wages and economic output into the local and regional economy. In addition, there are opportunities for development revenue (in the form of upfront land payment or ground rents over time) and mortgage recording, and sales taxes from resultant development. The Skyway River Loop will have a significant economic impact on the Buffalo metro area by creating direct investment in the project, the activation and development of 11.2 million SF of currently underutilized and vacant land, and the resulting ongoing activity from both.

The Skyway River Loop anticipates an economic corridor that activates green space along the waterfront and transforms adjacent/nearby property into sought-after development space based upon its proximity to newly-activated greenspace and to downtown Buffalo. Increasing walkability and access to the corridor is key to unlocking maximum economic potential, and thus maximum benefit to the local community, from the project.

With this in mind, our Team has performed an initial, high-level analysis of the economic output stemming from the construction of the Skyway River Loop as well as the resultant programming that is projected.

Phase 1 of the Skyway River Loop has a budget of \$283 million and will directly create 2,695 construction jobs, measured in worker-years, and an additional 2,393 spillover jobs generated from the new economic activity in the region. Thus, Phase 1 construction is projected to create 5,087 total jobs or worker-years in the Buffalo area and generate over \$467 million in total new economic output.

Phase 2 of the Skyway River Loop is expected to result in direct expenditures of \$191 million. This expenditure will create 1,816 direct construction jobs, measured in worker-years, with an additional 1,612 spillover jobs created out of the new economic activity in the region. Thus, Phase 2 construction is projected to create 3,427 total jobs or worker-years in the Buffalo area and generate over \$314 million in total new economic output.

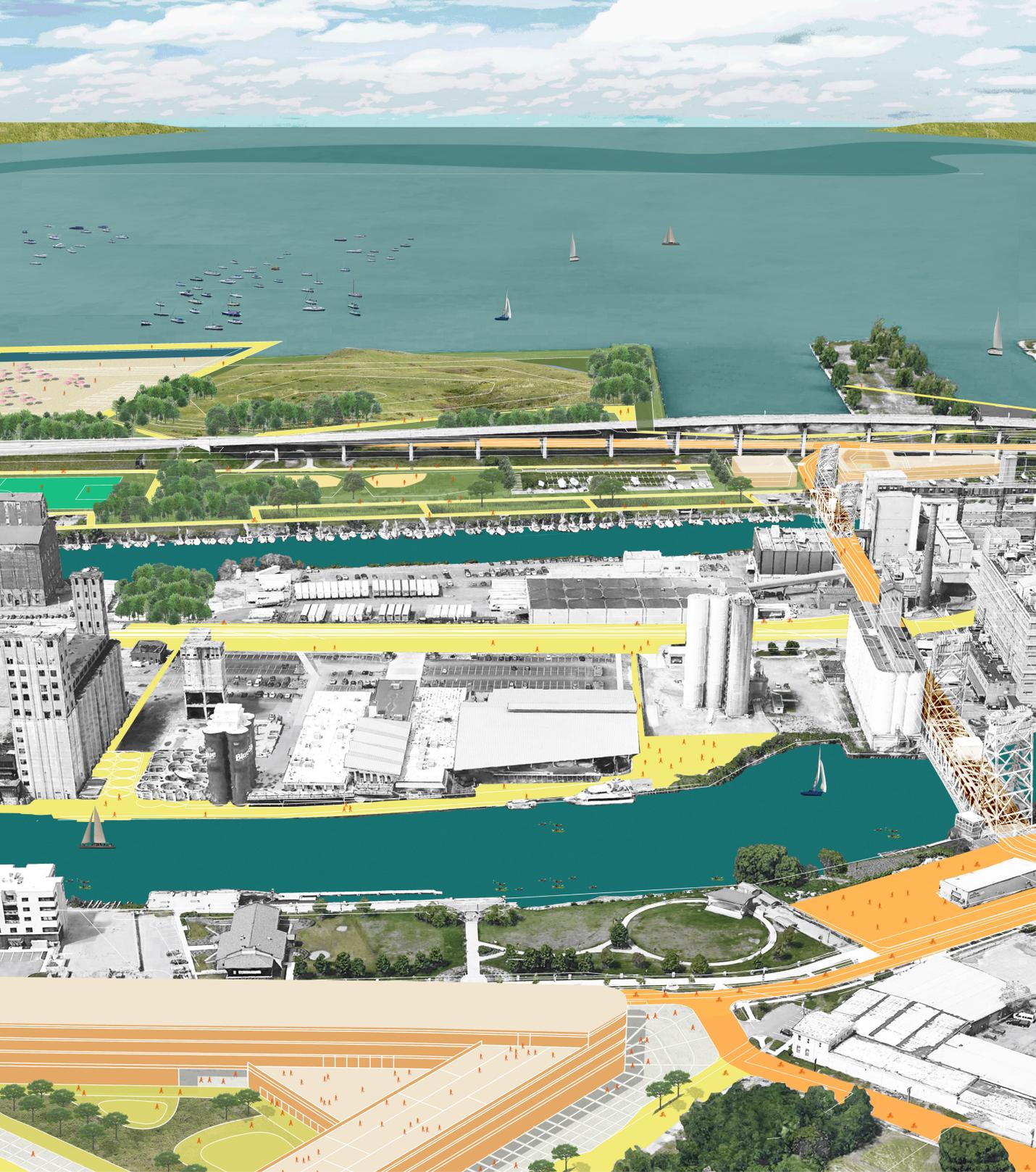
In addition to the new economic output spurring from the Skyway River Loop construction, the new program development will support additional construction economic activity. At full build out (with the final build year to be determined), the new development will have created an estimated 105,600 (in worker years) construction jobs and generated \$11.1 billion in direct investment in the area. The new construction will also generate an estimated 75,471 spillover jobs and \$8.8 billion in spillover economic activity. Altogether, the full build out of the program has the potential to create 181,131 total new jobs and generate \$20 billion in economic activity.

Further analysis is needed to assess absorption and final build year of the proposed full build out. For the purposes of this analysis, we

estimate a full build development scenario. Once construction has been completed, the new offices, retail stores, restaurants, hotels, recreational areas, multifamily buildings, industrial buildings, and cultural and educational centers will generate new economic activity on an ongoing basis. The new economic activity is expected to create 107,232 new jobs (including both direct and spillover jobs) and generate over \$17.3 billion in new economic output annually in the Buffalo area.

Development Area	Skyway River Loop Construction Impacts					
	Direct Effects	Spillover Effects	Total Effects	Direct Construction	Spillover Construction	Total Construction
Phase 1	2,695	2,393	5,087	2,695	2,393	5,087
Phase 2	1,816	1,612	3,427	1,816	1,612	3,427
Total	4,511	4,005	8,516	4,511	4,005	8,516

Development Area	Development Potential			
	Construction	Spillover	Direct	Spillover
Outer Harbor	3,335,286	\$2,351,454,962	15,075	\$1,443,507,991
Inner Harbor	1,335,542	\$934,085,746	8,117	\$603,500,611
UAW Station and City Canal	8,906,534	\$6,278,424,381	62,467	\$2,513,871,311
180 Corridor and Harbor Center vicinity	8,818,344	\$6,081,591,340	52,385	\$2,242,402,061
Seneca Area	6,438,960	\$4,504,338,351	39,135	\$1,640,384,000
Total	24,433,666	\$19,942,494,381	181,131	\$17,343,682,964



TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The Skyway River Loop does not propose any substantial modification to the traffic capacities or flows of any highways, local roadways or crossings. Instead, existing local roadways are improved and reconfigured for better accommodation of pedestrians, bicycles, mass transit and vehicles, with streetscape improvements incorporating trees, green space, walkways and sidewalks. Existing bridges and approaches are also improved to provide safe crossing for multiple transit modes. This approach allows us to achieve all of the benefits of better waterfront connectivity, while recognizing the importance of our continued connection with the lakefront community to the South of Buffalo.

A new bridge connecting to the outer harbor is proposed at S Michigan Avenue to replace the bridge that was demolished in the 1950's, shortly after the Skyway was completed. A new crossing to the Outer Harbor from Silo City is also proposed.

The connection of the Skyway into the central business district of Buffalo will be modified. The goal is to treat the Skyway as a local road and encourage reduced speeds for general safety appropriate to the width of the roadway, rather than a highway with higher speeds. The four connections to I-190 would be removed. This will decrease the perception of the Skyway as a highway speed and open land below to new development and to additional daylight. The Canal-side open public space would be unburdened by the off-ramp. The site at Seneca and Pearl Street would be fully unburdened to allow for development. Signalization and street improvements along the full length of Church Street will accommodate Skyway traffic entering the city or connecting to I-190; all access and off ramps from I-190 to Church Street would remain.

Near impacts include:

- No or limited modification to existing traffic flows.
- By removing the I-190 connections to the Skyway, the Skyway and Route 5 become a focused bridge and road directly to the lake-side Southtowns communities.
- The current intertwined system of highway access and egress to the Skyway is removed, reconnecting all of downtown and the waterfront for pedestrians, runners, bicyclists and drivers.
- Encourage the use of the I-190 by all of the other Southtowns communities.
- Slight increase in peak-hour traffic on Louisiana St., N. Michigan Ave. and Niagara Street along segments connecting to and from Route 5.
- Allows the expansion of an accessible green infrastructure loop from downtown to Michigan Avenue, Michigan Avenue to the Outer Harbor, connecting downtown and the East Side to the waterfront.

Long-term impacts include:

- Expands the green loop infrastructure loop to the Ohio Street Corridor and the First Ward.
- Downtown, the waterfront, the East Side and the First Ward are all connected for everyone.

SPECIFIC TRAFFIC MODIFICATIONS

Northbound

- Vehicles exiting Rte. 5 at Ohio St.:
 - Will continue to Louisiana St northbound.
 - Louisiana St. is currently two opposite lanes of traffic with two side parking lanes, but the parking is underutilized, and the existing properties have off-street parking.
 - During AM/PM rush hours, parking will be forbidden, allowing two lanes of traffic flow in each direction. Optionally, one of the two off-peak direction lanes can be reversed.
- From Louisiana St. to I-190:
 - A new entrance ramp will be constructed from the Louisiana St. flyover and connecting with the existing Hamburg St. entrance ramp. This is intended for large trucks (WB-540/WB-65).
 - Passenger vehicles may use this ramp as well but may also turn right onto Perry St. to Hamburg St. Perry St. will run one-way only, with both off-street parking lanes removed. One of the off-street parking lanes will be used for through traffic. The other will be for landscape elements on both sides of the street, extending the sidewalk, to mitigate noise and air pollution concerns.
 - To alleviate congestion at Perry/Hamburg, Hamburg south of Perry goes one-way (S/B ONLY). Perry east of Hamburg is a dead-end, whatever few cars there are can go N/B or S/B – just not W/B.



Adjusted traffic distribution northbound from Route 5 to I-190

Southbound

- Some Southbound traffic on I-190 will exit at Niagara St. to Elmwood Ave.
 - This is the existing traffic pattern when there is partial Skyway closure for construction (currently happening – August 14, 2019).
- Other Southbound traffic will run from Louisiana St. to Ohio St.:
 - Traffic on Louisiana St. will be improved by the removal of parking during rush hour periods, as noted in the Northbound scenario. Optionally, one of the two northbound lanes can run contra-flow during the PM rush hour, separated with traffic cones.
 - The turning lane on Niagara St. should be converted to an additional travel lane going southbound. The bike lane should be protected with plastic bollards and marked with reflective paint.
 - At Silo City Rd. (just after crossing the River), some traffic will pass over a new bridge and turn north to connect to the existing Fuhrmann Blvd. rotary to the Skyway (no trucks allowed due to limited turning area). The remainder of the traffic will continue on Ohio St. south to the Tift St. entrance to Rte. 5 (trucks and passenger vehicles).
 - Fuhrmann Blvd. should be reconfigured to accommodate the additional traffic as well as improve the pedestrian and bicyclist experience. The existing west (waterside) grass area will be reconfigured with a shared sidewalk/bike trail. Parking will only be allowed during non-rush hours, allowing two lanes of traffic flow in each direction.



Adjusted traffic distribution southbound from I-190 to Route 5